

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/670/2013  
19 December 2013

## **The Gambia must immediately release three opposition members convicted of sedition**

The sedition convictions against three opposition party members in Gambia must be quashed and the authorities must release them immediately and unconditionally, Amnesty International said.

Amadou Sanneh, National Treasurer of the United Democratic Party (UDP) and two other UDP members, Malang Fatty and Alhagie Sambou Fatty, were today convicted of sedition and sentenced to up to five years of imprisonment after claiming one of them had suffered harassment and death threats from the Gambian authorities.

All three of those convicted allege they were tortured while being held incommunicado prior to their trial and two of them – who pleaded guilty in October – had no legal representation throughout their incarceration and trial.

“These convictions confirm exactly what the opposition has claimed all along: that the Gambian government persecutes its opponents. Charges of sedition and false information are being used to curtail freedom of expression and legitimate dissent,” said Aster van Kregten, Deputy Africa Director at Amnesty International.

Amnesty International considers that the three men convicted today are prisoners of conscience and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Amadou Sanneh was arrested on 25 September 2013 by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

He had written a letter supporting UDP member Malang Fatty who was intending to apply for asylum abroad. In the letter, Sanneh claimed Malang Fatty had received death threats from government security services and that the UDP was routinely persecuted by the Gambian government.

Sanneh’s arrest came six days after the NIA arrested Malang Fatty at Amdallai Border Post as he tried to leave the country. He was in possession of Sanneh’s letter at the time of his arrest. The NIA also arrested Malang’s brother, Alhagie Sambou Fatty, who had asked Sanneh to write the letter.

The two men were held in incommunicado detention for nearly one month, alleged that they were tortured, and were forced to ‘confess’ on national television.

In the meantime, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has publicly rebuked those engaged in opposition parties:

“Tarnishing the image of this country is treasonable and all those engaged in this would pay a high price. Hating one’s country is ungodly. In any religion mounting a smear campaign against one’s country on behalf of outside powers is TREASON,” the President said.

## **Background**

Section 114 of the Criminal Code Act Cap 10 Vol.III Laws of The Gambia 2009 (Criminal Code), which deals with providing false information to a public servant. It could be used to restrict the right to freedom of expression in violation of The Gambia's obligations under international human rights law.